



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT, INC.
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305 W
*Your Home
Is Our
Business*

March 5, 2010

To: Senator Eric Coleman and Representative Brendan Sharkey, Co-Chairs,
and members of the Planning and Development Committee

From: Bill Ethier, CAE, Chief Executive Officer

Re: RB 305, AAC the Preservation of Stone Walls

The HBA of Connecticut is a professional trade association with 1,100 member firms statewide, employing tens of thousands of Connecticut citizens. Our members are residential and commercial builders, land developers, home improvement contractors, trade contractors, suppliers and those businesses and professionals that provide services to our diverse industry. We estimate that our members build 70% to 80% of all new homes and apartments in the state.

We strongly oppose section 1 of RB 305 as an open-ended, extremely broad authority to block housing and economic development, or even farming and forestry activities. It is unclear, uncertain and unbound in its scope. NIMBY towns and CAVEs (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) would have a field day throwing this stone at any development proposal.

We also oppose section two, which authorizes municipalities to abate property taxes for property containing a stone wall that is preserved or maintained in accordance with section 1. This, too, is unnecessary. Municipalities already require developers to preserve stone walls along scenic roads, and some towns require developers who take down stonewalls to rebuild them elsewhere on the property. So, is this tax abatement intended for existing property owners not developing their property? Moreover, the vagueness of the language creates more uncertainty property owners surely do not need. For example, what is the distinction between preservation and maintenance? Should stone walls be preserved in their original state or their current state? How are stone walls supposed to be maintained? Would this authority lead to requirements on property owners to periodically rebuild stonewalls as nature degrades them over time? To remove moss, limbs or vegetation that covers or obscures them?

The road this new authority creates, no doubt paved with good intentions, is dangerous, unnecessary and sends another bad message to the development community and to all property owners.

Please do not pass RB 305. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.